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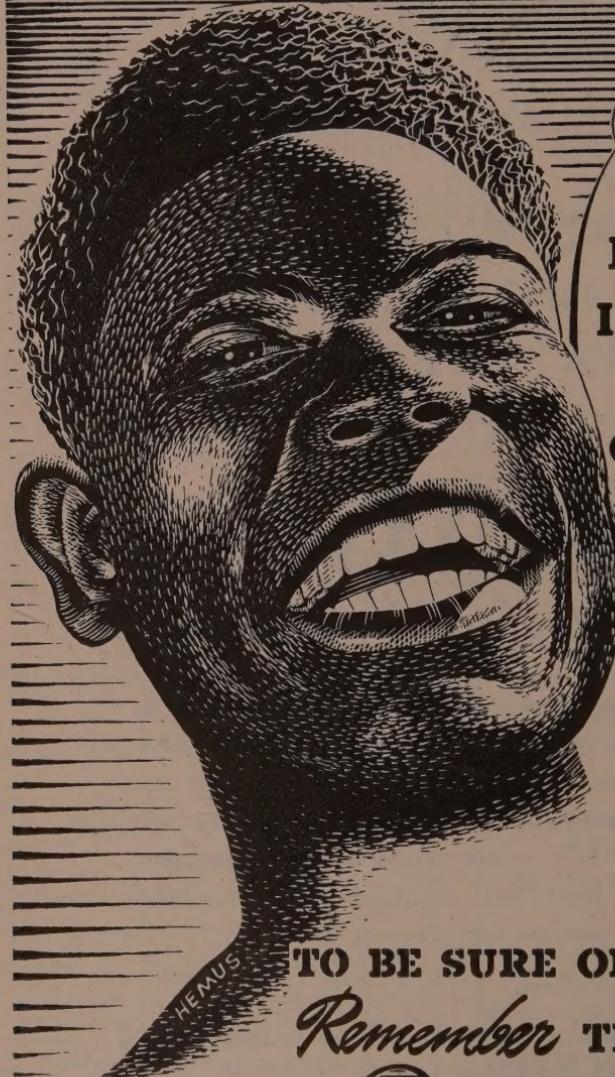
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THEATRE WORLD



Portrait by Vivienne

**Gladys
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P.693A

Theatre World

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THE British Theatre Conference held during the first week of February at the Caxton Hall under the Chairmanship of Mr. J. B. Priestley, aroused a considerable amount of interest. Readers may like to have on record the recommendations which were finally approved. They were as follows:—

The reconstruction of the Arts Council and the strengthening of its work.

The abolition of censorship through the Lord Chamberlain's Department.

The provision of adequate orchestras in theatres and music-halls.

A substantial reduction in taxation of the gross takings of the living theatre.

Co-operation from the "straight" side of theatrical production to improve the present low level of British musical comedy and revue.

The lifting of the ban on the building of new theatres.

The establishment by the Government of a working party for the theatre.

The establishment at universities of chairs of theatre and drama.

The formation of a committee under the Minister of Education to advise on dramatic and musical education.

The regulation of entry into the theatrical profession by a form of training or apprenticeship.

The appointment of a delegation to discuss with the Minister of Health a proposed clause in the Local Government Bill giving local authorities power to set up civic theatres.

Unfortunately the Conference was not wholly representative, for the Theatrical Managers' Association had officially declined to take part, nor was the theatregoer himself represented in any effective way. It cannot be denied that our leading commercial theatre managements have a vast experience, particularly of the economic aspects of the present-day theatre, and in many instances they set a worthy example on the artistic side.

A careful perusal of the recommendations above reveal that many of them are contro-

versial and they have aroused some comment from well known writers on the theatre.

No. 10, concerning entry into the profession, raised many doubts in the minds of all those who see our actors and actresses as artists first and foremost. We shudder to think what the stage might have lost if only neatly documented trainees from the Drama Schools were allowed access to our stages. It was this attitude which seemed to us to mar other recommendations of the Conference. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," and even Sir Stafford Cripps, who might be expected to approve of a little planning, refused to come down on the side of organised interference in the ordering of our theatres. Nevertheless the coming together of this body of people was proof of the vitality which persists in the British theatre, and it was interesting to note that only a short time later the Commons passed a Bill allowing local authorities to add 6d. in the £ to the rates to pay for entertainments. Almost immediately Doncaster asked the Minister of Education to approve their intention to buy the Arcadia Cinema, seating 830, for £10,000. It is planned to develop there a Theatre and Art Centre.

* * *

Two plays failed to make the grade during the last month in the West End; *Four Hours to Kill* at the Saville, and *All This is Ended* at the St. James's. The former was an American thriller that never got going, while the British Theatre Group's latest production, though splendidly acted and sincerely written, was quite out of tune with the mood of the day.

Other plays not reviewed this month include *The Gorbals Story* at the Garrick; *Cockpit* at the Playhouse; *Castle Anna*, which followed Michael Egan's *Bred in the Bone* at the Lyric, Hammersmith; and *The King's Jesters*, the revue at the King's, Hammersmith.

F.S.

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New Shows of the Month

- "Diamond Lil"—Prince of Wales, 24th Jan.
"The Relapse"—Phoenix, 28th Jan.
"The Government Inspector"—New, 3rd February.
"The Indifferent Shepherd"—Criterion, 5th February.
"A Comedy of Good and Evil"—Arts, 11th February.
"The Vigil"—Embassy, 11th Feb.
"Golden Rain"—New Lindsey, 12th Feb.
"Family Portrait"—Strand, 17th Feb.
"Gathering Storm"—St. Martin's, 18th Feb.
"Native Son"—Boltons, 20th Feb.

"Diamond Lil"

THE important thing is to go to the Prince of Wales Theatre in the right frame of mind. An evening's full-blooded enjoyment awaits you if this astonishing piece of work is viewed as a burlesque of one of those late 19th century melodramas which wrung the hearts of our grandparents.

As for Mae West herself, she is larger than life. This is the most triumphant personal appearance of a film star that London has seen. This is Mae in technicolour of a wonderful mauvish hue and never once could one complain that the star did not deserve the biggest spotlight in London.

On page 11 will be found something of the story that lay behind the creation of *Diamond Lil*, a fabulous creature of the Bowery, and beyond that it would defy the skill of the cleverest storyteller to describe the plot of this red hot "drammer." The voluptuous Mae has introduced everything except the kitchen stove. Suffice to say that a great deal of the action takes place in the dance hall of Gus Jordan's Saloon, New York City, in the Gay Nineties, and that in addition to some thirty-seven more or less leading characters the programme mentions, anonymously, Toughs, Dance Hostesses, Street Women, Society Ladies and Gentlemen, Police, etc. Subjects touched upon in the lightest possible way include a couple of murders which nobody bothers to solve, the White Slave Traffic, the Can-Can, most of the heartrending ditties of the time, the Salvation Army and, more seriously, Lil's diamonds.

There could be nothing but praise for William Mollison's colourful production. The play opens with a most realistic fight in Gus Jordan's Saloon and after that there is no flagging. Apart from Miss West, little demand is made upon individual actors, but the performances of David Davies as Gus Jordan, Francis de Wolff as Dan Flynn, Richard Bailey as Captain Cummings, Mai

Bacon as Frances Donovan, and Noelle Gordon as Rita Christina are well above the average.

F.S.

"The Relapse"

THIS exquisitely produced revival of Sir John Vanbrugh's comedy was reviewed fully in a recent issue. Tennent Productions Limited have brought it to the Phoenix Theatre from the Lyric, Hammersmith, and one might safely prophesy it will see out many a moon in Charing Cross Road. It is extraordinary how delicately these Restoration comedies, or at all events this one can skate around indelicate subjects. Haunted by the knowledge that our present day censor would never countenance the worthy Knight's humour, we can nevertheless wallow in admiration for his exquisitely pointed dialogue, all the while noting that obviously the Arts Council agrees with us.

Cyril Ritchard and Madge Elliott continue to delight as Lord Foppington and Berynthia. Jessie Evans is a monstrously bucolic Hoyden and her father, Sir Tunbelly Clumsay more than lives up to his name in Hamlyn Benson's rotund performance. Anthony Ireland and Esmond Knight are worthy examples of the young men of fashion of the time, and Audrey Fildes' Amanda is a model of the virtue so constantly in danger. Anthony Quayle has directed the play and it is not far off the mark to say that this is the best comedy in Town.

F.S.

"The Government Inspector"

FOURTH production of the present Old Vic season, this revival of Gogol's well known comedy broke new ground, but as production its chief strength turned out to be its weakness.

John Burrell has chosen to caricature all the characters, with the possible exception of the masquerading junior official from St Petersburg. The natural result is that the colourful group of small town Russians emerge as mere puppets, wonderful to look at against Felix Topolski's brilliant decor which is the play's chief strength, but almost meaningless in relation to the underlying satire.

As mentioned, Alec Guinness' performance as Ivan Alexandrovitch is straight enough and is indeed an artistic triumph of the first rank. Looking just like David Copperfield (the other characters have Pickwickian appearance with a touch Hogarth). Mr. Guinness played the opportunist clerk with a wonderful blend of heartlessness and poetry. Another first rate piece of acting comes from Harry Andrews

Osip, his servant, a bearded beffured old rascal straight from the steppes.

In the limits of the mould within which their characters have been interpreted, the rest of the company give a colourful rendering of the group of small town officials anxious to hide their inefficiency and graft from the prying eyes of the Government Inspector. Bernard Miles is the red-faced pot-bellied Mayor so easily hoodwinked by the bogus Inspector, and Mark Dignam, George Rose, Michael Raghlan, Peter Copley, John Garley and Kenneth Connor are others who add spice to the proceedings.

The Mayor's wife and the Mayor's daughter are the most blatant caricatures. Rosalind Atkinson and Renee Asherson are called upon to over-act these roles to an impossible degree.

Undoubtedly Topolski's settings and costumes are the strength of a production that just fails to achieve spontaneous comedy or a hundred per cent. satire. F.S.

"The Indifferent Shepherd"

PETER Ustinov is a young playwright who never ceases to interest even when he fails. His latest play at the Criterion Theatre is a strangely uneven work though never boring. Once again he demonstrates his gift for understanding the middle-aged, while his weakest characters remain the youngest. During the first week *The Indifferent Shepherd* suffered from apparent under-rehearsal. A little later no doubt the true pattern of the play became more apparent and one could relish to the full the fundamental incompatibility between the two clergymen around whose outlook on life the moral takes shape.

The story is that of a country vicar, Henry Aspen, whose wife neither understands him nor enjoys the confines of a country vicarage. In any case she has for some time been the lover of a peculiarly unattractive ex-Group Captain, a coarse, materialistic egoist who has tired of her.

Into this odd triangle steps Melanie's brother, Hugh Wigmore, an ex-Chaplain, for whom religion and the salvation of souls hold no problems. His self-assurance seems to bring success, as we see from his dealings with the amoral little maid who tries to commit suicide when she finds she is going to have a baby. Hugh pounces on this specimen for his laboratory with glee. He has at his fingertips a dozen welfare associations who will see her through her spot of trouble. Fortunately Nellie has no soul. Robert, the Group-Captain's son, is another kind of problem, and so is Hilary Jordan, Melanie's niece, whose blatantly unconventional life savours of escapism.

Gladys Cooper returns to the West End as the tormented Melanie, and though her performance opened uncertainly there were



IRINA BARONOVA

is starring in *Dark Eyes*, a comedy by Elena Miranova, which opened at Southsea on 23rd Feb., and goes to Brighton, Oxford and Manchester before coming to the West End. Born in St. Petersburg during the revolution, Baronova attracted the attention of Leonide Massine. She was engaged for Colonel de Basil's Ballet Russe Company and appeared in London before the war. In *Dark Eyes* she plays the role of one of three Russian actresses who are destitute, but hope to get a play accepted for production. Their friend, a Russian prince, invites them to the home of his fiancee's father, with shattering results to the peace of the household. Charles Goldner will direct for Linnit and Dunfee.

many glimpses of her former dramatic power. Andrew Cruickshank is most convincing as the complacent ex-Chaplain and Charles Cullum brought perhaps a little too much crudity to Melanie's ex-lover. The three young people, Nellie, Robert and Hilary, are in the safe hands of Charmian Eyre, Peter Street and Anna Turner, though each of these characters fail to convince on several occasions due to the author's conception rather than the actor's lack of skill.

There remains Francis Lister's Henry Aspen, a beautiful performance indeed. But then Francis Lister has rarely failed to enhance a role. He makes us realise very clearly that it is because this self-effacing country vicar sees to the heart of things that life overwhelms him, but that it is such choice souls the real victory comes.

Yes, *The Indifferent Shepherd* never bores, and on the production side is included the most realistic stage presentation of a summer thunderstorm that we have seen. But as to whether it is a good play, probably only time will tell. F.S.

"A Comedy of Good and Evil"

THE danger with Richard Hughes' comedy is that its central idea, or joke, of a Welsh vicar's wife being impishly burdened with a dancer's leg is too slight, in the author's treatment, to sustain a full evening's entertainment. So the producer and cast must guard against longeurs. On the whole, this Arts Theatre production in February, under Vivienne Bennett's direction, found the amusement and minimised the monotony.

The acting was very even. Hugh Griffith's vicar was sound, if a little too slow and ponderous. Diana Morgan handled the offending limb, and conveyed the atmosphere of the play, with a nice sense of its values. Hilda Schroder's girl imp was all that an assured little devil could be, while such players as Philip Leaver, Mary Jones and Desmond Llewelyn all helped to complete the picture of Welsh rusticity and superstition.

F.J.D.

"The Vigil"

IN Ladislas Fodor's *The Vigil* and *Family Portrait* by Lenore Coffee and W. Joyce Cowen, London has had the opportunity of seeing two strongly contrasted plays written around the story of Jesus, and both are from America.

The Vigil is a compelling and extraordin-

arily vital work which seeks to defend the Resurrection story. The author has brought the historical facts into vivid relief by setting his play in a present day American Court in which most of the well-known figures of the Easter story are put on the witness stand and cross-examined by the Prosecutor and the Defense Counsel. The Judge sits high up in the background, the lighting is subdued except around each witness as they come forward. The effect is that of a vivid dream in which every word spoken seems to echo in a kind of empty vastness. Some, no doubt, would find the play crude in parts and even brutal, but few could fail to be gripped from the moment the curtain rises.

Everything depends on the acting of the individuals in an unusual play of this sort and the author is magnificently served. Douglass Montgomery is an oily Prosecutor, and Barry K. Barnes a quiet and convincing Defense Counsel. We remember the magnificent performance of Diana Churchill as Mary Magdalene, the most important witness for the defence, and the burning fervour of David Greene as Saul of Tarsus, who on the third day returns after his conversion on the road to Damascus and undoubtedly irretrievably shakes the case for the prosecution. Other memorable performances came from Cherry Cottrell as Susanna, a simple girl of a deep child-like faith, and from Anthony Shaw as Pilate, and Marjory Hawtrey as his wife.

The Defendant (John Probert), is the gardener of the place where Jesus was buried, who is accused of snatching the body. He remains unshaken by the Prosecutor's clever cross-examination. The real climax of the play is when Mary is taunted into re-enacting her first meeting with the risen Christ before the Court to prove the Prosecution's contention that the figure she encountered was none other than that of the gardener. It is now that we sense the real identity of the Defendant, who, speaking no word, allows Mary to deny that he is her Lord, after the light of recognition is clearly seen upon her face. In a wonderful emotional scene Mary pommels the quiet figure, at the same time tearfully asking for his forgiveness.

After the Judge's summing-up—the Jury being the audience—in our opinion the play should have ended. The introduction of the choir singing an Easter hymn in a church now seen for the first time through the windows of the Court Room, is in the nature of an anti-climax.

F.S.

"Golden Rain"

M.R. Stephen Wendt's first play, *Golden Rain*, is a notable achievement. It tells an absorbing story, the characters are convincingly life-like and the dialogue is always



PHILIPPA HIATT and JACK ALLEN

who are playing the leading roles in the Ian Hay-Stephen King-Hall Navy comedy, *Off The Record*, which continues to play to packed houses at the Piccadilly. (Picture by Houston Rogers)

entertaining. The programme states that the action takes place in a small Cathedral town but scenes and characters strongly evoke a small Welsh manufacturing town.

There are no less than seven scenes and seventeen characters. Such generous treatment warms the heart after years of stingily planned plays in which the scene never changes and the characters are few. In *Golden Rain* all the small parts are fully alive and have good and amusing things to say. PC Mottley makes only one appearance, but he serves a double purpose. He fits exactly into the play's design and he provides occasion for Philip Stainton to perform a much enjoyed little character "turn" which makes the audience glad to be there. Fit and ripe are the small parts, but the principal parts are never overshadowed. Noel Howlett gives a compelling study of a man in a position of petty authority with hidden weaknesses of character which bring him to crime and ruin. His part is well written and not so much played as lived with high concentration. Barbara Leake ably seconds him in establishing the background and history of these pitiful people, so accurately observed and humorously depicted. Pauline Jameson heads the group of younger characters as an unmarried mother whose love for her infant son has supplanted the emotion which his father first aroused.

Perhaps the most important member of the cast is Hugh Munro, who gives an accurately idiotic performance on which the whole play is based. The story cannot be briefly told. Robbery, arson and murder have their place, but the characters are all far from melodramatic; they are human, mainly unscrupulous, self-deluding and comic. Production by C. Denis Freeman is extremely able, and the decor shows the imaginative ingenuity one expects from Richard Lake.

H.G.M.

"Family Portrait"

THIS is nothing more than the story, beautifully told, of the family of Jesus of Nazareth, and the effect of His ministry and Crucifixion on their well being. We are made to see very clearly that the Carpenter's brothers and sisters were blind creatures moving about in worlds unrealised, for only Mary, the Mother of Jesus, felt the uniqueness of her eldest son, and she only dimly, as the last line of the play indicates.

The play must suffer, of course, because of the non-appearance of the central figure and in his absence the figure of Mary takes first prominence. Fay Compton's performance in this role is magnificent. Her quiet dignity, common sense and unerring faith are felt in every line she speaks.

Quite rightly the play is dressed according to no particular period and this ageless quality pervades the delightful sets showing

Glamour from America



MARJORIE REYNOLDS

lovely Hollywood film star, who co-stars with Bonar Colleano, Jnr., in the new Jack Hylton musical *Burlesque*, which opened at the Princes Theatre on 25th February. *Burlesque* is a musical version of the straight play of that name which had a successful run here in 1928. (Portrait by Houston Rogers)



SHIRL CONWAY

making her first appearance in this country, in the leading woman's part of Lisa Marvin in *Carissima*, the Lee Ephraim musical production at the Palace Theatre (11th March). American Shirl Conway is in private life the wife of Bill Johnson, of *Annie, Get Your Gun*.

the home in Nazareth; a wine shop at Capernaum; a street in Jerusalem, and the Upper Room. These relations of Jesus are ordinary enough folk, with their small town jobbing business and their craving for respectability.

The acting of the large cast follows the quiet tone set by the author: there are outstanding performances particularly from Clare Harris as Mary Cleophas; Ernest Clark as James, the straightlaced Pharisee brother of Jesus; Ellen Pollock as Selima, the café Manageress; Mary Horn as Mary Magdalene and Shaun Noble in his brief appearances as Judas Iscariot. Raymond Westwell and David Markham too are most convincing as Joseph and Judah, the younger brothers of Jesus.

F.S.

"Native Son"

NATIVE SON, by Paul Green and Richard Wright, is a play of violent action, based on a novel. It has been frequently performed in the United States of America. Its ten scenes unfold the tale of Bigger Thomas; how he unintentionally smothered Miss Dalton; how he burned her body in her father's domestic furnace (a remarkable feat this); how he interposed Miss Mears between himself and the policeman's bullet; and how he was sent to the "chair." One is expected to sympathise with Bigger, but, really, so much depends

upon where one's sympathies lie before one meets him. He is presented as a young negro, embittered by living conditions in the Black Belt of Chicago, excitable, fantastically vain, lurking about with a gun and a knife. Certainly he presents a problem, but life always presents a problem and the Biggers are usually better able to look after themselves than the people with whom chance connects them. It often seems that the people who get murdered are better dead but, none the less, murder has generally been regarded as a bad thing which might spread if not checked.

Comparison with Galsworthy's *Silver Box* asserts itself. Suppose that Jones had been coloured, that the Barthwicks' child had been a daughter, and this play, *Native Son*, follows naturally—allowing for the bracing effect upon human behaviour of the stimulating climate of Chicago. The moral of both plays is the same. This seems to indicate that the "colour question" is but one aspect of "man's inhumanity to man." Colour heightens the tragedy of Bigger, as it does that of Othello, but the same story could be told were Bigger white.

Robert Adams gives a very impressive show as Bigger. No other part is comparable in size and importance, but, among a company of two dozen or so, Marie Ney, Abraham Sofaer and Irene Worth make memorable contributions. The mere succession of scenes is exciting and tribute is due to Colin Chandler for efficient direction.

H.G.M.

AS WE GO TO PRESS

DANNY KAYE, who has made a tremendous impression at the Palladium, has agreed to continue there for an additional fortnight until 13th March. He is undoubtedly the most successful of the visiting stars from America that London has seen in Variety during these past months.

* * *

Jean Sablon will make his bow to London audiences at the Palladium for two weeks only, commencing on 15th March. Meantime, at the Casino, Olsen and Johnson of *Hellzapoppin* fame, have turned the theatre upside down in some of the craziest, noisiest antics seen over here. Audiences are lapping it up.

* * *

John van Druten's *I Remember Mama*, with Mady Christians, Adrienne Gessner and Frederick Valk in the leading roles, opened at the Aldwych on 2nd March. Miss Christians is the director. Michael Redgrave will appear in Canada and New York in *Macbeth* as already announced, with Flora Robson as Lady Macbeth.

(Continued on page 12)



MARY MACKENZIE

who has scored a big success as Myrtle, the girl who causes the trouble in *Gathering Storm*, at the St. Martin's Theatre, produced too late for review this month.
(Portrait by Angus McBean)

Whispers from the Wings

BY
LOOKER ON

MAE WEST offers all one could expect of a world celebrity. Known in every walk of life, her maxims will long outlive her human span, and having become identified with an essential item of flying kit, her name is assured of a place with the immortals. Her star personality has such magnetism that even in an indifferent play it packs vast theatres with people curious to contemplate those legendary curves and to hear that sibilant voice protesting that she is no angel.

"Come up and see me sometime," was her characteristic reply to my request for an interview. Going up to see Mae meant taking a lift to her fourth-floor suite at the Savoy, where her welcome was as warm as the tropical temperature of her elegant apartment with its superb view of Cleopatra's Needle. There is no disenchantment about meeting Mae. For all the ballyhoo, she more than comes up to expectations. Framed in a cerise hood, the platinum hair is as rare a sight as the 22 carat diamond sparkling on her finger, and the fabulous eyelashes are as deep a blue as a lagoon by moonlight. Despite all the reference books say about her fifty-six years, Mae looks no more than a handsome forty.

She was so pleased with London's overwhelming reception on the opening night of *Diamond Lil* at the Prince of Wales Theatre, that she almost implored the audience to desist while she applauded them. It will remain a golden peak of her glittering career. Being based on real life, *Diamond Lil* is a play for which she has special affection. Away back in 1926 Mae was stunning Broadway in her first play, *Sex*, which still remains her favourite, as it made her a dramatic star overnight.

The most regular patron was a retired police officer, who had subsequently become an hotel manager. One night he turned up at the stage door to see Mae, with an explanation for staring at her, night after night, from the front row of the stalls. He was fascinated by her uncanny resemblance to a girl he had known in his wild youth in the Bowery. It was a girl who had acquired so many diamonds that she earned the underworld nickname of Diamond Lil. He was but one of many admirers, and it seems that Lil, far from being an angel, gained some of her gems by methods too shady to be discussed in polite society.

Looking at pictures of Lil, a luscious beauty of the Lillian Russell era, Mae was quick to see the possibility of writing a colourful melodrama, which would appeal to her own as well as the two previous



MAE WEST

who is packing the Prince of Wales Theatre with her play *Diamond Lil*, in which she takes the title role.

generations. She visited the Bowery and in her mind's eye saw how it looked at its zenith, in the days of the noisy Nineties, with tough crowds milling in dance saloons of questionable repute. Within two months of meeting Lil's ex-admirer, Mae had *Diamond Lil* in rehearsal. It opened in her native town of Brooklyn to fantastic business, followed by a three year run on Broadway.

The clothes of *Diamond Lil* were a sensation. The Broadway first night in 1928 changed the fashions of two continents. Mae's curves had never been more seductively displayed, in tangerine velvet and parma violet satin, encrusted with diamonds of untold wealth. Being a stickler for detail, Mae wore genuine period corsets. She acquired them even before the script was finished so that she could live in them and get the feel of the good old days. She confesses that wearing Victorian corsets gave her a better idea of the atmosphere of the

(Continued overleaf)

Nineties than half-a-dozen visits to the Bowery, and so she wore them while writing the last act of the play.

Mae has influenced women's dress throughout the world on more than one occasion. Few realise that the present vogue for hoods was dictated by her in 1944, while playing on Broadway in *Catherine Was Great*. The number of wigs she wore in that play abused her hair to such an extent that off-stage she devised turban hats with drapes that more or less concealed the hair, yet still looked smart. Hoods followed as a variation, and have been copied by elegant women in every fashion centre of the civilised world.

Diamond Lil is the most brilliantly illuminated play in London. A powerful mauve spotlight picks up Mae the moment she makes her entrance and is trained upon her throughout the evening. It follows her about the stage as closely as her own shadow. Audiences going to the theatre to see film stars are already familiar with their close-ups on the screen. They want to sit as near to the stage as possible to see every detail, so they expect a limelight for their idol. As Mae never disappoints those who come up to see her, she spends her working hours in a blaze of glorious light. Like her public, she has no time for Rembrandtesque shadows.

AS WE GO TO PRESS (Continued)

News has just been received of the next Old Vic Theatre Company's production at the New Theatre. This will be *Coriolanus* with John Clements in the title role, scheduled to open on 31st March. The producer is Mr. E. Martin Browne.

* * *
New productions of *La Traviata* and *Boris Goudonov* are to be added to the repertoire of the Covent Garden Opera Company on 1st April and 6th May respectively.

* * *
Ram Gopal returned to the West End for a three weeks' season at the Saville on 3rd March.

* * *
At the Arts Theatre on 10th March a new play by Christopher Fry, *The Lady's Not For Burning*, which is a comedy set round about 1400, will be presented, with Alec Clunes in the company. Jack Hawkins produces.

* * *
A revival of Synges' *Playboy of the Western World* will be presented at the Mercury on 11th March.

* * *
Covent Garden has seen a new ballet from Frederick Ashton to Stravinsky music called *Scènes de Ballet*, a revival of *Coppelia* and the distinguished productions of Wagner's *Tristan* and *Isolde* and *The Valkyries*. These will be reviewed next month.

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Phone : Temple Bar 5568



Digby (Anthony Oliver), Captain of Crescent House, sends his fag, Duval (Brian Peck), on his way with a friendly kick. (Left) : Digby's friend, Courtenay (Dale Rogers), a Prefect of Crescent.

“The Hidden Years” at the FORTUNE

• TRAVERS Otway's moving play about the problem of the adolescent in our Public Schools is presented by the London Mask Theatre at the Fortune, having been originally produced at the Boltons Theatre. The play is directed by John Wyse with decor by Michael Warre.

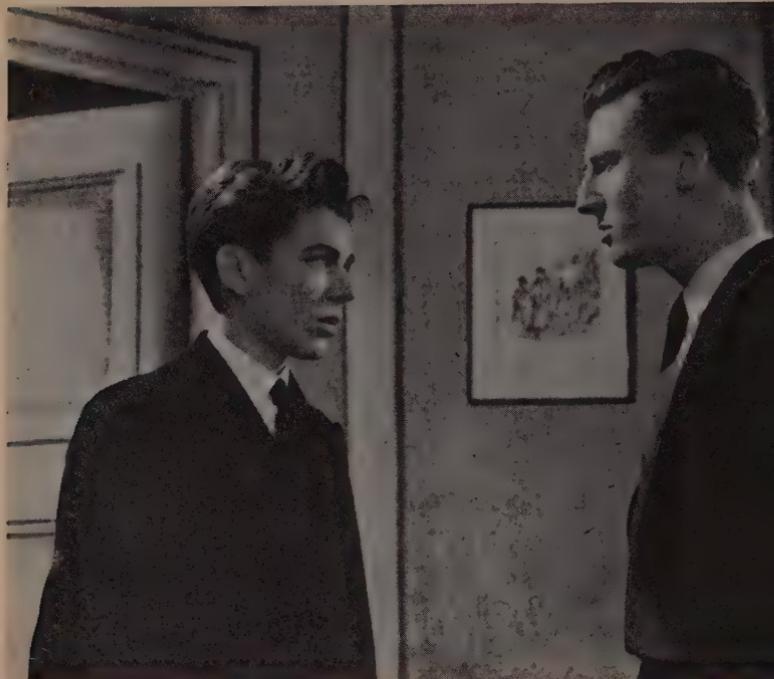
Some may feel that the author has shirked the real issue, but as a public schoolmaster himself, he has been able to delve very deeply into the strange emotions which make up the "hidden years" in a schoolboy's life. Mr. Otway would have us believe that this is a rare attribute in a schoolmaster, for the tragedy in his play is largely due to the inability of the masters at Harlston to come close to their pupils.

Mention has been made in previous issues of the outstanding acting of the cast, particularly of the fifteen-year-old Ray Jackson, whose portrayal of Martin-eau, the sensitive junior boy who is involved in the scandal, will not easily be forgotten.



Mr. Harrison, Housemaster of Crescent (Arnold English), pays Digby a visit in his study to discuss a question which has aroused considerable controversy in the school, namely whether Soccer should be replaced by Rugby as the school game.

PICTURES BY JOHN VICKERS



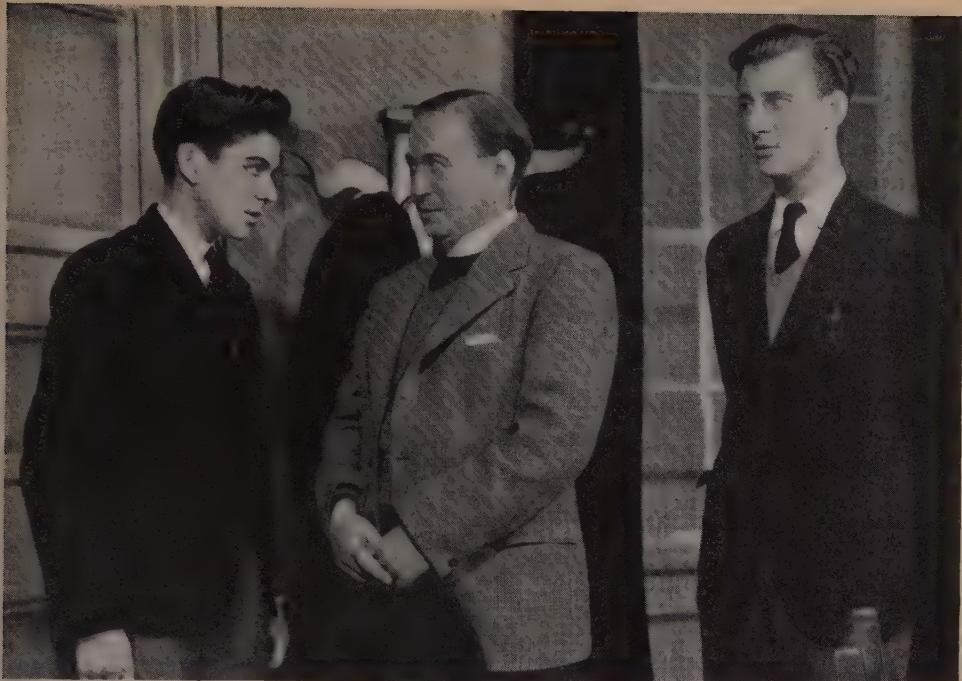
Martineau: Then you are not going to punish me?

Digby's first meeting with Martineau, a junior boy from West Side House. He had previously seen the boy swimming in the school sports and now when Martineau comes to apologise for missing detention, the older boy feels the same attraction for his youthful freshness and innocence.

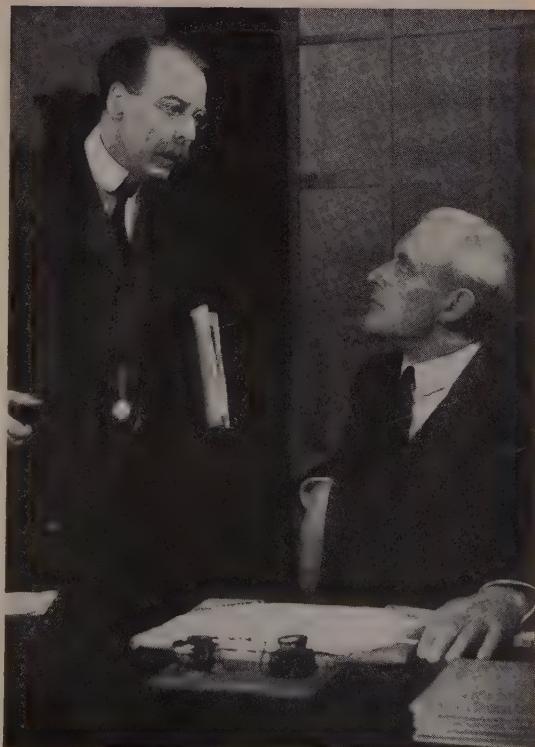
(Ray Jackson as Martineau.)



Martineau, looking rather embarrassed, is asked by Digby to wait while he discusses with Grange, a prefect of Crescent House, the question of the awarding of the House colours. Grange and Digby do not hit it off altogether. (Anthony Tancred as Grange.)



The kindly Vicar, the Reverend Chas. Dowson, takes a great interest in the boys and always has a kindly word of advice for them. Though Mr. Dowson has moved to another parish some 15 miles away he still invites groups of juniors over for tea and a game of tennis, after which he drives them back in his shaky old car. Almost invariably there is a breakdown and the boys are late. (James Hayter as the Rev. Charles Dowson.)



Mr. Broadbent, the Maths Master, tries in vain to patch up an old quarrel with Mr. Johnstone, Housemaster of West Side. Mr. Broadbent is only too aware of his growing age and the knowledge that he is not likely now to achieve the Housemastership he has always coveted. Meantime retirement is out of the question for he is the support of his ailing sister. Mr. Johnstone, on the other hand, is aggressive and self-important, and unpopular both with the other masters and the boys. (Robert Webber as Mr. Broadbent and Nigel Clarke as Mr. Johnstone.)



Mr. Thorpe : Let's get some propaganda work done by Saturday.

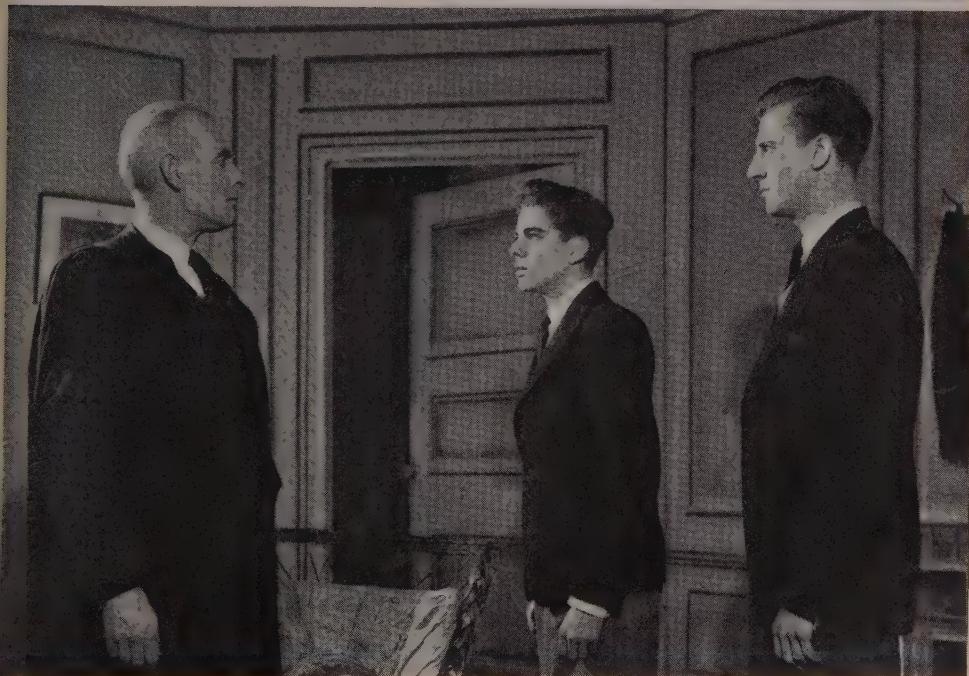
Digby and the Second Master of Harlston discuss the meeting which is to decide about the school's football. Mr. Johnstone is chief agitator for the change to Rugby, but Crescent House holds the casting vote and is resolutely on the side of Soccer. As Captain of Crescent, Digby has naturally earned the open hostility of Mr. Johnstone. (Anthony Marlowe as Mr. Thorpe.)

(Below) : Some time after his first meeting with Martineau, Digby discusses with his friend, Courtenay, the wisdom of a prefect having a friendship with a younger boy. Courtenay, in the most enlightening passage in the play, gives what advice he can, which does in fact reveal a real insight and understanding.



As the term goes on Martineau develops great hero worship for the older boy. They meet out of bounds in the woods on Sundays and on this particular Sunday, Martineau's 15th birthday, Digby was unable to keep the appointment. Martineau comes to Digby's study to discover what happened and the boys spend some time together. Digby gives Martineau a copy of *Beau Geste* as a birthday present and they fall to discussing a number of topics, including Shakespeare.

The boys forget that Chapel is to be held early that evening, and only realise what has happened when they hear the boys singing the closing hymn. A few minutes later, Mr. Johnstone, who has had his suspicions for a long time, bursts into Digby's study. Martineau is ordered back to West Side, and Mr. Johnstone goes off to report to the Head.





The poignant scene in Mr. Johnstone's study. Martineau breaks down under the master's cross-examination. His friendship with Digby has been entirely innocent and when a junior boy later sows in his mind suspicion as to Digby's real character, the heartbroken boy runs away from the school.



Thanks to Mr. Dowson, who had picked Martineau up on the road some miles from the school and had pleaded against expulsion with the Head, Digby and Martineau are allowed to stay on at school, though from now on they must not meet secretly. Mr. Thorpe has a kindly word with them, and Digby's final promise to his young friend, recovering from his escapade in the San, is that he will cheer him from the touchline on the football field.



Never Acted but once.

AT the THEATRE ROYALL in Drury Lane, this present Wednesday being the Nineth day of November, will be presented,

A New Play called,

HENRY the Second King of England.
No money to be return'd after the curtain is drawn.
By their Majesties Servants. *Present Roy & Regent.*

The oldest regular English Bill (1692). (From the original in the Verney Collection.)

The Story of the Theatre Programme

by RAYMOND MANDER and JOE MITCHENSON

"THE casual sight of an old Playbill, which I picked up the other day, know not by what chance it was preserved so long—tempts me to call to mind a few of the Players who make the principal figure in it. It presents the casts of parts in the 'Twelfth Night' at the old Drury Lane Theatre, two and thirty years ago. There is something very touching in these old remembrances. They make us think how we once used to read a playbill—not as now, peradventure, singling out a favourite performer, and casting a negligent eye over the rest, but spelling out every name, down to the very mutes and servants of the scene; when it was a matter of no small moment to us whether Whitfield or Packer took the part of Fabian when Benson and Burton, and Phillimore—names of small account, had an importance beyond what we can be content to attribute now to the times best actors. 'Orsino' by Mr. Barrymore. What a full Shakespearean sound it carries! How fresh to memory arise the image and the manner of the gentle actor!"

So wrote Charles Lamb in 1822 in his essay on "Some Old Actors." How many other lovers of the theatre both before and since have had their memories stirred by the sight of an old theatre programme or playbill; this thought tempts us to dive into the history of this integral part of play-going.

The playbill is an ancient thing. The practice of printing information as to the time, place, and nature of the performances to be presented by the players was certainly

common prior to 1563. John Northbrook, in his treatise against theatrical performers, published about 1579, says: "They used to set up their bills upon post some certain days before to admonish people to make resort to their Theatres." Hence the term Posters which is still in use today. Old plays make frequent reference to this posting of playbills; in a 1599 play, *A Warning to Fair Women*, Tragedy whips Comedy from the stage crying:

"Tis you have kept the theatre so long
Painted in Playbills upon every post
While I am scorned of the multitude."

It is strange to find that the right of printing playbills was originally monopolised by the Stationers' Company. At a later period, however, the privilege was assumed and exercised by the Crown. It was not until after the Restoration that the Playbills contained a list of the Dramatis Personae or of the names of the Actors. But it had been usual apparently, with the title of the drama, to supply the name of its author and its description as a tragedy or comedy. Shirley, in the prologue to his *Cardinal*, apologises for calling it only a "play" in the bill:

"Think what you please, we call it but a
'play';
Whether the comic muse, or lady's love,
Romance or direful tragedy it prove,
The bill determines not."

From the same playbill also one gathers that the titles of tragedies were usually printed, for the sake of distinction, in red ink. As bills were then designed to serve a



M. GARRICK and MISS YOUNGE in the Characters of TANCRED and SIGISMUNDA.

Sigismunda. O Heaven! Tancred! Do not start me now!

double purpose not only to be stuck on posts of no great capacity, but to be delivered by hand to the houses of distinguished patrons of the theatre, they were printed on oblong strips of paper about seven inches by three. The earliest playbill in existence is of this type, being for Drury Lane for 9th November 1692. It announces the second performance of Bancroft and Mountford's tragedy of *Henry the Second, King of England*. The bills continued to be left at houses early in the morning into the following century. A note in a diary for 1712 says: "One morning from ten to eleven the Lady spent her time dawdling over the tea table and reading the playbills." It was not, as we have said, till later that the casts were given on the bills. When this was adopted it was only natural that trouble should arise between the actors as to their position and the size of their name on the bills.

Chetwood, who had been twenty years prompter at Drury Lane, and published a history of the stage in 1749, describes a difficulty that had arisen in regard to printing the playbills.

"Of old, the lists of characters had been set forth according to the books of the plays, without regard to the merits of the performers. As, for example, in 'Macbeth,' Duncan, King of Scotland, appeared first in the bill, though acted by an insignificant person, and so every other actor appeared according to his dramatic dignity, all of the same sized letter. But latterly, I can assure my readers, I have found it a difficult task to please some ladies as well as gentlemen, because I could not find letters large enough to please them; and some were so fond of elbow room that they would have shoved

Mr. Garrick and Miss Younge in the characters of Tancred and Sigismunda.

Sigismunda: O Heavens! My Lord, the King.

Tancred: Be not alarmed my Love!

The above are the words which appear beneath this illustration showing David Garrick and Elizabeth Younge in James Thompson's play at Drury Lane, 1775. (An interesting forerunner of the way we caption pictures in *Theatre World* today!)

everybody out but themselves, as if one person was to do all, and have the merit of all, like generals of an army."

Garrick seems to have been the first actor honoured by capital letters of extra size in the playbills. These distinctions in the matter of printing occasioned endless jealousies among the actors. Macklin made it an express charge against his manager, Sheridan, the actor, that he was accustomed to print his own name in larger type than was allowed the other performers. Kean threatened to throw up his engagement at Drury Lane on account of his name having been printed in capitals of a smaller size than usual. His engagement for 1818 contained a condition, "and also that his name shall be continued in the bills of performance in the same manner as it is at present," viz., large letters. On the other hand, Downton, the comedian, greatly objected to having his name thus presented, and complained to Elliston, his manager, on the subject, "I am sorry you have done this," he wrote. "You know well what I mean. This cursed quackery, these big letters. There is a want of respectability about it, rather a notoriety, which gives one the feeling of an absconding felon, against whom a hue and cry is made public. Or if there be really any advantage, why should I, or any single individual, take it over the rest of my brethren? But it has a nasty, disreputable look, and I have fancies the whole day the finger of the town pointed at me as much as to say, 'That is he. Now for the reward!' Leave this expedient to the police officers, or those who have a taste for it. I have none." Would any leading comedian of today be so self sacrificing?

(Continued on page 36)



OPERA AND BALLET
AT COVENT GARDEN

"The Mastersingers"

• WAGNER returned to the Opera House on 21st January when Karl Rankl conducted a splendid production of *The Mastersingers*. In the picture above is portrayed the fight at the end of Act II. In the centre of the group is Grahame Clifford as Beckmesser, the town clerk.

Left : Victoria Sladen as Eva, Hans Hotter as Sachs and Frank Sale as Walther in Sachs' Workshop (Act III, Scene 1).

Below : The final scene of the opera in the Festival Meadow, outside Nuremberg.

(Pictures by Baron)





"Mam'zelle Angot"

Leonide Massine's gay ballet has proved a popular addition to the Sadler's Wells Ballet Company's repertoire at Covent Garden. The music is selected from works by Charles Lecocq, and the delightful decor and costumes by André Derain are a triumph of the production. In the top picture the Barber, brilliantly danced by Alexander Grant, is overcome when he sees his fiancée with the Caricaturist (Michael Somes and Margot Fonteyn). Above, left: An amusing moment from Scene I, and right, The Aristocrat (Moira Shearer) and Mam'zelle Angot, rivals for the affection of the Caricaturist, have an encounter in Scene II. (Pictures by Edward Mandinian)



MARGOT FONTEYN

as Mam'zelle Angot, a role to which she brought gay abandon and a delightful sense of humour.

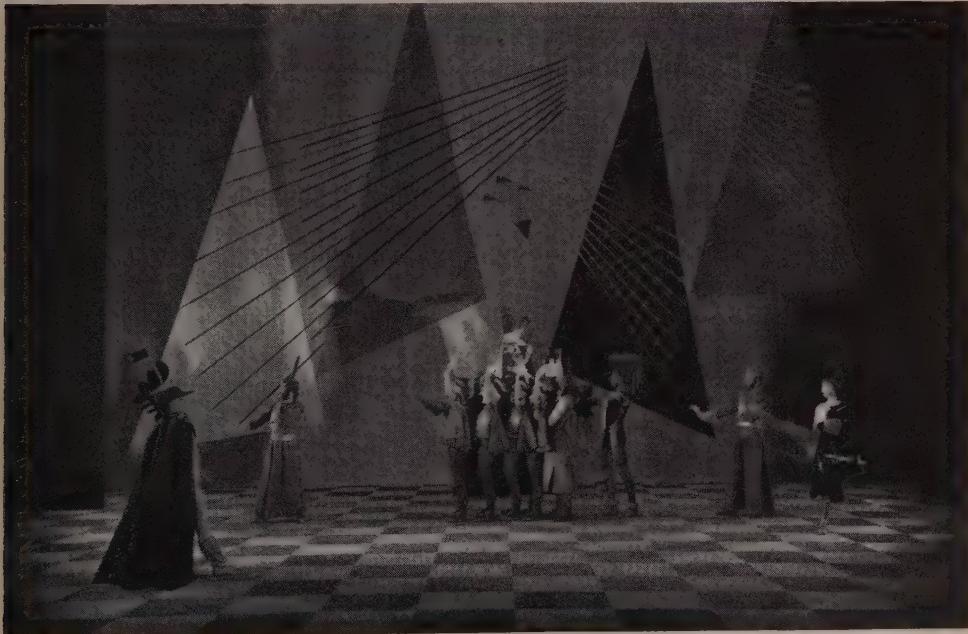


MOIRA SHEARER

gives a finely contrasted performance as The Aristocrat, and her dancing is brilliant throughout.

Below: "Checkmate"

This season has brought a most welcome revival of Ninette de Valois' striking ballet, *Checkmate*. The scenery and costumes for this work were lost in Holland at the time of the German invasion in 1940, as will be remembered. In this scene Beryl Grey appears right as the Black Queen. *Checkmate* was first produced in Paris on 1st June 1937, and had its first London production on 1st October of the same year.



Frank Sharman



SADLER'S WELLS
THEATRE BALLET



Edward Mandinian

Right:

"Les Rendezvous"

Frederick Ashton's charming ballet was recently revived by the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet Company with new scenery by William Chappell. Right are Michael Boulton and Elaine Fifield, who takes the part which Markova created.

"Parures"

The pictures above and left are scenes from Anthony Burke's new ballet which had its first performance on 21st January. *Parures*, to the Theme and Variations from Tschaikowsky's Suite in G, is an all-dancing ballet in the classical style and promises to be a popular addition to the repertoire. Though very different in style it is a worthy successor to this young choreographer's first ballet, *The Vagabonds*. Vivienne Kernot has been responsible for the decor and costumes for both works.

Left are Maryon Lane and David Poole, two of the leading dancers in this ballet.



"Mountain Air"

● SCENES from the amusing Swiss holiday comedy by Ronald Wilkinson, which has successfully settled down at the Comedy Theatre. The acting of the small cast is lively and convincing, while the delightful set by Elizabeth Agombar is a highlight of a most pleasant piece of entertainment.

PICTURES BY HOUSTON ROGERS

(Left): Martin Miller and Avice Landone as Dr. and Mrs. Hubermann. The doctor is anxious to acquire colloquial English and to this end welcomes an odd assortment of visitors to his lovely home in the mountains.



Dr. Hubermann, finding that his latest unexpected visitor, ex-Wing Commander George (Geoffrey Sumner), talks in his sleep, sets about waking him up.



(Left) : While the Scots business man who has arrived to do a deal with the Professor, propounds the virtues of his new drink, ex-Lieut. Harry, having just sampled the beverage, thinks he sees an apparition. But this is none other than Dr. Jackson, who arrived the night before looking like a frump, and has now emerged for her morning dip.

(L. to R.) : Mary Martlew as Dr. Noel Jackson, Stephen Jack as Hamish Laurie, and Michael Evans as Harry.



Dr. Hubermann : This is my big momentum.

(Left) : Professor Hubermann, who is a fanatical cycling enthusiast, at last persuades the party to go riding up the mountain with him.



(Left) : Left alone in the house, the ex-Wing Commander makes rapid headway in his flirtation with the Hubermanns' niece, an attractive and provocative French girl. (Margaret Goodman as Nicolette.)

THE YOUNG VIC COMPANY

"The Shoemaker's Holiday"

SCENES from the Young Vic's production of Thomas Dekker's famous comedy. This talented company of professional actors, offspring of the Old Vic Theatre Centre, will be touring until July, including visits to Ireland and possibly the Continent, to show what the English professional theatre is doing for young audiences. In the scenes on this page are (left) Royden Godfrey as Master Hammon and Jean Wilson as Jane. (Below, centre) Ann Hefferman as Sybil, Stuart Burge as Firk, Mervyn Blake as Hodge, Patrick Benson as Ralph and Alfred Burke as Hans. (Foot of page) The King (Anthony van Bridge) intercedes for Rose (Gillian Hicks) and Rowland Lacy (Alfred Burke). Also in the picture are Royden Godfrey as the Earl of Cornwall, Guy Bark as the Earl of Lincoln, Allan Blakelock as Sir Roger Oatley, Harold Lang as Simon Eyre, Merula Salaman as Marjorie Eyre.



"Noah"

• THE Young Vic will be playing for two weeks at the Kilburn Empire from 22nd March so that Londoners will have an opportunity of seeing them in *The Shoemaker's Holiday* and a delightful production of *Noah*, scenes from which are given on this page.



Noah ushers on board the Lamb and the Wolf side by side. (Anthony van Bridge as Noah, June Vincent as the Lamb and Max Miradin as the Wolf.)

PICTURES

BY

ANGUS
MCBEAN



The children defy Noah and hoist a sail.



Deserted by his family and with Mrs. Noah (Merula Salaman) broken by the strain of the voyage, Noah asks God if He is satisfied with His work.

Dressing a Revue

by ERIC JOHNS

IN their way the *Sweet And Low* series of revues which have been the attraction at the Ambassadors since 1943 are as unique as the comic operas of Gilbert and Sullivan. Never since Savoyard days has there been such a perfect matching of talents. The book and lyrics of Alan Melville, the music of Charles Zwar and the scenery and costumes of Berkeley Sutcliffe, all under the expert direction of Charles Hickman, have given us what we consider the acme of intimate revue. It is something of a miracle, and one wonders if it can possibly happen again. There is reason to believe it can. Alan Melville has completed another script—this time for Hermione Baddeley—with Berkeley Sutcliffe looking after dresses and décor.

It is Berkeley Sutcliffe we have to thank for those nostalgic glimpses of the Bridge at Avignon and the façade of dear old Daly's in the current Ambassadors' show. His association with the forthcoming Melville revue means that wit and sophistication will be heightened by bewitching costumes and intriguing décor. It seems difficult to imagine that work of such beauty and significance is turned out at whirlwind speed, but dresses are always a rush job in any show, and more especially in revue, which rarely takes final shape until close on the opening night.

The theory of engaging a different designer for every big scene in a revue is directly opposed to views held by Berkeley Sutcliffe. "It is so much easier for a revue to have proper plan and balance," he says, "if only one artist is responsible for the designs. He can meet the producer in the early stages and define some sort of pattern to be followed throughout. They can decide upon the presentation of the material—whether it is to be played in a false proscenium, for instance, or on a series of rostrums. Herbert Farjeon went so far as to work out the running order of his shows long before the first night. It was never altered, and thus his revues took on a definite rhythm of their own. The designer can help to give a revue a certain unity which distinguishes it from a music hall bill. I even go so far as to suggest that whoever is responsible for décor and costumes should also design posters and programme, so that they are all in the same key as the show itself.

"Designing for revue is the most difficult job of all. The maximum effect has to be gained with the minimum of material. The first scene may be Mexico, the next Tokyo. Each must suggest the essence of the place it sets out to depict. It must be obvious to the audience the moment the curtain rises. In revue there is no time for any subtle building-up of atmosphere. Speed



Denis de Marney

BERKELEY SUTCLIFFE

is everything and any scene that bewilders people is a failure. In the same way, costumes must express character and help the artist to project his part in the shortest possible space of time.

"Back-cloths are vital to revue. They must be well designed, as they are constantly used to express mood and atmosphere on an otherwise bare stage. Elaborate furniture and cumbersome accessories cannot be used in a show where speed is so essential. Easily manageable cloths have to do all the work. Costumes, too, have to be designed with an eye to quick-changes and limited dressing-room space.

"Dressmaker and designer must work hand in glove. The designer must study dressmaking so that he knows the working possibilities of every type of material. The finished clothes need not be a slavish imitation of the designer's original sketch. The sketch, after all, is only a helpful suggestion—a jumping-off ground. It is the working basis of an idea, enabling designer, dressmaker and artist to get together and make the most of it. They may ultimately create a costume differing considerably from the first impression submitted by the designer. Anyone can draw a pretty picture, but the designer only draws sketches that can be translated into terms of dressmaking material. In other words, he puts the dress on paper—not a picture, which though

(Continued on page 34)

Echoes from Broadway

BY OUR AMERICAN CORRESPONDENT E. MAWBY GREEN

If this column seems to continually hammer away at the fabulous cost of producing a play on Broadway these days, it is because this outrageous economic nightmare is now the most important factor in selecting the plays to be presented. With 50 to 75 thousand dollars up for a one set play, producers must be extremely cautious; they must aim only for the box-office jackpot; they can't risk doing the unusual and the theatre, of course, is the great sufferer.

About two years ago, playwrights, actors and producers interested in a better theatre, woke up to the strangling effect this condition was having and decided to do something about it. They couldn't lower production costs, but they could form experimental groups and produce their plays in little theatres off Broadway.

The first group to create a stir on this basis was the Associated Playwrights. These young authors on their release from the army won scholarships from the Theatre Guild and for about a year met at a weekly seminar under the guidance of Professor Kenneth Rowe, of a mid-Western college on leave to work for the Guild. But just talking and criticising each other's plays was not too satisfactory, for no play is ever finished until it is produced, so these ambitious authors broke away from the Guild and formed the Associated Playwrights to

stage their own plays in the small auditorium of a settlement house on the Lower East Side. Their third production, *Our Lan'* by the Negro author, Theodore Ward, won high critical praise and was brought to Broadway earlier this year by a commercial management, where it unfortunately failed to make the grade. No new plays by this group have appeared as yet this season, but one of the playwrights explained this by saying: "None of us seems to be a play a year man; just say we've got inside us a play every two years."

About the same time the Associated Playwrights swung into action, the American National Theatre and Academy set up the Experimental Theatre. Getting great concessions from the various theatrical unions, which brought the cost of production down to several thousand dollars per play, this group aimed to put on six experimental works a season by both American and foreign authors using professional directors, designers and actors in the leading roles. Their first season was pretty much of a failure, unearthing no script of any particular merit. This season, however, started off with fireworks. Charles Laughton had been trying for several years to get a professional production of Berthold Brecht's *Galileo*, but without much luck. He tried a little theatre production in Hollywood last year hoping

(Continued on page 32)



Wendell Holmes, Meg Mundy and Karl Weber in a scene from the New Stages production of Jean-Paul Sartre's *The Respectful Prostitute*, which was seen in London at the Lyric, Hammersmith.

(Picture by Vandamm)



Pictures by Roynon Raikes

"Blood"
New Work by
Ballets Nègres

Scenes from Berto Pasuka's latest ballet which was presented in February at Wimbledon Theatre, after opening at Brighton. The theme is the problem presented by a white man's marriage to a half-caste. In the picture above the white man is seen trying to drag his wife away from a native rite, which has a fatal fascination for her.



CHERRY ADELE as the half-caste girl and BEN JOHNSON as her white husband.



BERTO PASUKA as the Papaloi, Head of the tribe, during a sacrificial dance.

Echoes from Broadway (Contd)

to raise the necessary funds through it, but his notices were mixed and the money was not forthcoming, so as a last resort, he volunteered his services to the Experimental Theatre. This meant removing from the Experimental Theatre's schedule another play about Galileo, *The Lamp at Midnight*, by Barrie Stavis, and many theatrical people familiar with both scripts were outraged, for the Stavis play was considered by most to be the better of the two. A cry of "commercialism" went up against the Experimental Theatre, but nevertheless they proceeded as planned. Mr. Laughton opened in *Galileo*; received middling notices, and returned to Hollywood defeated. Meanwhile, *The Lamp at Midnight* was acquired by another group, New Stages Inc., for their first production.

For their second offering the Experimental Theatre presented John Garfield in



Joan Tetzel and Ruth Amos in *Strange Bedfellows*. (Picture by Talbot, N.Y.)

Jan de Hartog's *Skipper Next to God*, which London has already seen. This production was much more favourably received and with John Garfield promising to stay with the play as long as people want to see it, has been transferred to a Broadway playhouse by wealthy producer, Blevins Davis, who has promised to turn back all the profits to the Experimental Theatre.

The third production, *A Long Way From Home*, a new version of Gorki's *The Lower Depths* for Negro actors, has recently opened and while its chances of making Broadway are remote, everybody is agreed it was worthwhile doing, so things are con-

siderably brighter for this group than they were a year ago.

Meanwhile, New Stages, which seems to consist of actors in love with the theatre but forced to earn their living on the radio, is busy winning a fine reputation and the gratitude of serious theatregoers via their first two productions, *The Lamp at Midnight* and *The Respectful Prostitute*.

The Stavis script, which incidentally talk has it will eventually be produced by the Old Vic, proved its point for its defenders by getting much the better notices than Brecht's *Galileo* and playing to large, enthusiastic audiences for four weeks. But the thunderbolt struck with Jean-Paul Sartre's *The Respectful Prostitute*. Preceded by an indifferent performance of Lennox Robinson's indifferent one-acter, *Church Street*, the curtain wasn't up two minutes before the audience knew it was in for a terrific theatrical adventure. A few squeamish souls got shocked and left early but the remainder stayed on to cheer and acclaim this the most exciting evening since *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

This French conception of a Southern lynching party might be incredible in its treatment of the Southern senator with the velvet voice, whose platitudes about America, patriotism and mother confuses Lizzie, the prostitute, into signing a false statement saying she was raped by a Negro, but the inherent truth and horror of the situation plus M. Sartre's sharp, psychological character portraits are so compelling that they more than counterbalance the giggles the senator draws. Of course, the director, Mary Hunter, showed very good sense in treating the senator satirically, although occasionally his lines had him tumble into farce, but we can't help wondering whether in the French and London productions the senator wasn't treated "straight"—as the out and out villain in a stark melodrama.

As the jittery, good natured, bewildered Lizzie, Meg Mundy, a former model and dancer who made a rather unimpressive Broadway debut earlier this year in the short lived *How I Wonder*, has created nothing short of a sensation. During the intermission of two plays that opened several nights after *The Respectful Prostitute*, the conversation was still all Meg Mundy with everybody discussing her performance and advising their friends to go down to the reconverted movie house in Greenwich Village to see *The Prostitute*. Sharing her triumph is director, Mary Hunter, a very successful radio actress who has long directed for little theatres and whose two previous jobs of Broadway staging gave little indication that she was capable of producing such a hard, incisive, electrifying performance.

(Continued on page 34)



She waited a moment under the fairy lights;
the garden seemed enchanted; she
waited by the dark tree, secure in beauty,
until she heard the expected footstep.

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Dressing a Revue (Continued)

delightful to look at, may be quite useless as a practical design.

"Character clothes are usually the most difficult of all, and often owe much to suggestions offered by the artists who wear them. For a comedy song the soubrette may decide to put on her wig back-to-front. To the audience it might appear an inspired piece of clowning, for which the designer can hardly take credit. Hermione Gingold made a number of individual suggestions for her burlesque of the Edwardian musical comedy star in *Sweetest And Lowest*, when she realised the comic possibilities of the butterfly costume.

"A give-and-take spirit should exist between the designer and the artist. Without pandering to temperament, the designer should try and make the artist feel as happy as possible. An actress will only be at the top of her form if she feels she is wearing the best possible costume for her particular number, whether as a Taglioni sylphide or a Macbeth witch. Physical appearance has to be taken into consideration, of course, and clothes modified to the people who wear them. One would not dream of asking an actress with prominent "salt-cellars" to wear an off-the-shoulder evening gown. It would look bad from the front, apart from having an unfortunate psychological effect upon the wearer.

"In a revue a designer must be prepared to sacrifice at least half the work he submits. The producer always starts off with far too much material in his script, which is pruned ruthlessly until only the best remains. Sets and costumes created for the ultimately rejected numbers are simply discarded. In a play, scene and costume requirements are known at the outset. Not so much work is done in vain, as there is no wholesale slaughtering of the script. If a revue is to have that essential balance, the producer's word must be taken as final and the designer must bear his disappointments without a murmur, even when his favourite numbers are among the rejected items.

"The prospect of creating pretty clothes always appeals to a designer. They give him more satisfaction than others. My favourite task in revue is creating clothes for a witty song, sung against a stylised back-cloth, such as the 1851 number in

Sweetest And Lowest or Hermione Gingold's presentation of "Mabel the Horse with the Hansom Behind." Costumes and settings should be conceived simultaneously and built-up side by side, as, after all, they are seen together as one picture from the front. I have no favourite period. It is always the current one in which I happen to be soaked. At the moment it is Ancient Rome, as I have been captivated by the white marble pillars and blue skies of Italy, turning out sets for the dramatisation of Noel Langley's *Cage Me A Peacock*, which is a far cry from those equally enjoyable excursions to Hyde Park in 1851 and Daly's in 1910."

Echoes from Broadway (Continued)

With 200 people turned away on second night, New Stages, of course, is planning to bring the *The Respectful Prostitute* up to Broadway and has proudly announced that Thornton Wilder is adapting Jean-Paul Sartre's *The Unburied Dead* (*Men Without Shadows* in London) for their next production.

But to return to hard headed Broadway and the search for the box-office smash, a far from subtle and far from brilliant comedy, *Strange Bedfellows*, by Florence Ryerson and Colin Clements, and produced by Philip A. Waxman, seems headed for success, precisely because its virtues, or rather lack of virtues, are not subtlety and brilliance but broadness bordering on burlesque and sexy situations simmering in the bedroom farce tradition made popular in the '20s by the veteran producer, Al Woods. Apart from these farces and *Life With Father*, which incongruous as it may sound, *Strange Bedfellows* also resembles, the authors give due credit in their script to *Lysistrata* and *The Taming of the Shrew* as the source of their inspiration, for they are telling of a conservative senator's son who marries the leading American suffragette in 1896 and brings her home to his family in San Francisco. At first, of course, the family is shocked by her presence and her ideas but it doesn't take her too much of the second Act to win over the women of the household and to invoke Lysistrata's plan of continence for conquest to get the men's support for the movement.

(Continued on page 40)

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The Story of the Theatre Programme (Con.)

Playbills changed little in themselves during the 18th century, but with the 1800's they began to grow in size till by the late 1850's they had assumed enormous proportions, some being nearly 3 feet long! It was then that posters and playbills became divided; press advertisement had also begun to make itself felt, and the theatres designed posters for outside display and smaller programmes for use in the theatre. For a time

THEATRE ROYAL, COVENT-GARDEN.
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Mr. POWELL, Mr. CORNWALL,
Mr. LAUNCELOT,
Mrs. Margery, Mrs. DAVENPORT,
John, Miss GLUCKY,
Lucy, Mrs. EGERTON,
In a Comedy by MR. BARTLEY.
An ADDRESS written for the OCCASION,
Will be spoken by Mr. BARTLEY
SONGS, DUETS, &c.
By Madam ANTHONY, Mr. COOKE, TAYLOR, BROMHURST,
PEARMAN, H. PHILLIPS, and CALLAGHAN,
Miss CAREW, Miss POVEY, Miss HALLAND,
Miss BOCHSA, and Signor PUZZI
To which will be added, the Comic Opera, called
BELLES WITHOUT BEAUX
Or, the Ladies among Themselves.
BY MRS. ANTHONY, WITH A DUET FOR THE HARP & HORN.
Mrs. Daffington by MRS. KELLY,
Eliza, MRS. McCAREW, in which will introduce "Oh my poor infant's face so bright,"
Mrs. Gwendoline by MRS. H. H. MIRVAN,
Mrs. Bell, Mrs. SUDJEWELL.
* The value of the Composers, and the Band of the Theatre Royal, English Opera
House will plentifully recompence their Services on this Occasion.
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Troyden, John Calvert, Mr. F. G. W. Holden, Miss Richard (immature), 1/-
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Duchess, C. Taylor, Mrs. M. H. Mirvan,
Bessie, Mr. Durran, Mr. Greville,
Dame, Mr. G. C. Lewis, Mrs. H. H. Mirvan,
Collegies, C. Taylor, Mrs. M. H. Mirvan.

bills were still sold in the street to audiences on their way to the theatre. Dickens says that it hadn't died out by 1871. But in the end managements put a stop to this practice and the free programme was instituted —two distinct types were printed, a coarse cheap production for the pit and gallery, and a special version on high class paper for the better parts of the house. The latter were sometimes lace edged and scented by Rimmel, the famous perfumier. In time these began to have advertisements printed on them, and in some cases they grew to the size of small magazines, but this was a short lived craze and soon died; it was revived in the nineteen-twenties with the highly successful "Magazine Programme," which continued till stopped by the paper shortage in 1941. It was at the beginning of the century that managers began to realise that a large revenue could be made from the sale of programmes and the traditional "no fees" system was gradually abolished. It lives now only on first nights in London where the programme is still free, though even this privilege is fast disappearing. The free programme is, however, still maintained in America.

At various times and for special occasions unusual playbills and programmes have been printed. For benefits and State occasions playbills were often of satin, and programmes have been made in the form of fans, for the hot weather, and printed on transparent paper, white upon black, to be read in the dark, but innovations have been short-lived and the programme remains much as it was 80 years ago.

There are some large collections of play-bills and programmes; one in a London Museum is as nearly complete (for London) as can be made, and we ourselves are doing our best to collect and preserve all that come our way, both London and provincial, so that students in the future will have a source of reference and playgoers a means of recalling happy hours in the theatre.

Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson, the authors of this article, whose unique Theatre Collection is now widely known, are preparing a book (with Herbert Marshall) on "Hamlet Through the Ages," featuring prints and photographs of productions of Hamlet scene by scene.



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Amateur Stage (Continued)

Tallulah Bankhead, it has since been filmed
with Bette Davis and George Brent.

A new war play, *Quay South*, by Howard
Clewes, was the recent choice of the
People's Theatre, Newcastle. Its scene was
laid in an inn parlour in a derelict seaport;
with a cast of eight men and two women.

Middlesbrough Little Theatre selected
Our Town, by Thornton Wilder, for their
80th production recently. Subsequently to
the nine days' run their Green Room had a
producer's review of the play, followed by a
debate. A February debate had a legal
flavour—the theatre and the law. This
group believe in frequent talks and debates.

Jersey is enjoying a spate of amateur
activities on the island. The Green Room
Club, of long history, have given *Quiet
Week-end*, and a pantomime, *Puss 'In
Boots*, this winter.

The Mask Players are one of the few
groups in London giving Sunday perfor-
mances. On 22nd February at the Whitehall
Theatre they repeated their successful pro-
duction of *The Little Foxes*, by Lillian
Hellman.

Midland Bank D.S. gave their first
Shakespearian production, *Twelfth Night*,
at Toynbee Hall in February.

The Merchant of Venice, in modern dress,
also at Toynbee Hall, was the choice of the
Query Players in February.

Saloon Bar will be produced at the Scala
Theatre by the Fleet Street Players on 16th
March.

South London Little Theatre Group are
touring *This Happy Breed* in that area in
February and March. They aim to
encourage young people in drama.

Those "with a flair for classic drama"
may be interested in a new group, Greek
Drama (Amateur) Players, formed to
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An amateur dramatic recording club has
been formed by Mr. D. Stanbury, 23 Arcadian
Gardens, Wood Green, N22.

Rose Theatre Club, Burnley, composed of
boys aged 11 to 15½, and based on past and
present scholars of Rosegrove Secondary
Modern School, are producing *King Lear* on
9th, 12th, 13th and 16th March. Settings
and costumes for each production are the
work of the club, who also run their own
switchboard. Settings have been based on
the paintings of El Greco, and music
arranged from the works of Sibelius.

PUBLICATION RECEIVED

Mountain Ash, a one-act play for boys, by
Kenneth Anderson. Ten males. 2/-.

Edinburgh Festival

THE 1948 Edinburgh Festival of Music and Drama will include a two weeks' season by the Old Vic Theatre Company, and for the first time in this country, a one-week performance by the Compagnie Madeleine Renaud and Jean Louis Barrault from Paris. M. Barrault will be seen in *Hamlet*; a French classical play, and also one of his famous mime plays.

The Glyndebourne Opera Company will produce a Mozart season, and the Sadler's Wells Ballet in their two weeks' season will probably present a new Stravinsky ballet and a new ballet by Massine. The Sadler's Wells Company will include Margot Fonteyn and Robert Helpmann.

The Festival opens on 22nd August and will run until 12th September.

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If you have decided to give the "New Look" a try this Spring, don't forget that sun-tan or any bright make-up is out of the question. "Pink Prettiness" will be your aim, which means choosing your cosmetics a shade lighter than you have ever used before.

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Echoes from Broadway (Continued)

While almost all the critics agreed they laughed as much as the audience, they rather regretted seeing the play take the spicy farce turn and would have preferred it if *Strange Bedfellows* continued on to the end in the nostalgic comic *Life With Father* mood. While this might have been more artistically laudable from their point of view, it probably would have meant disaster at the box-office for even at its best *Strange Bedfellows* is only second rate *Life With Father*, and the audience, whether the critics approve or not, get all their big laughs watching the women run around in their nightgowns tempting the men and then refusing to come across.

Coming from Hollywood to play the suffragette is lovely Joan Tetzel, who you may have seen in *Duel in the Sun* or *The Paradine Case* and her pleasant performance is a fine indication of how Katharine Hepburn might do the role in the cinema.

Notwithstanding Noel Coward's personal endorsement of Michael Clayton Hutton's *Power Without Glory* for Broadway distinction, this West End importation graciously withdrew after four weeks. There was ample to admire in the writing and performance, and quite often the play seemed on the brink of success. Not until the end of the second Act did it begin to show obvious signs of tottering. Had Mr. Hutton taken care to spread his suspense more evenly and to build to a more extraordinary and exciting climax, this production would perhaps have had the power to give him the glory he doubtless desires.

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